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The Ovide "re-moralisé": the Z rewriting of the Ovide moralisé

The Ovide moralisé is well known not just as the first French translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses, but also as an allegorical text in its own right. Its anonymous translator interprets the Latin poem by attributing to it a natural, euhemeristic, moral or spiritual meaning. The Ovide moralisé survived in 20 manuscripts composed between the early fourteenth century and the late fifteenth (Baker and others 2018: 13–15). As proved by Jung (1994, 1996 and 2009), the textual tradition is irregular. A significant example of the diversity of these manuscripts are two late exemplars that do not contain the spiritual allegories: Paris, BnF, français 870 (Z^3) c. 1410; Paris, BnF, 19121 (Z^4) c. 1390–1410. These two manuscripts are the object of this article, which aims to reveal the particular ways in which the author of the text transmitted by Z^3 and Z^4 (to whom I will refer from now on as the 'rewriter' or as the 'new author') understood and interpreted the Ovide moralisé. This study explores the rewriter's ideology and the methods he used to convey his opinion of the original text. By focusing on a specific case study, the myth of Calisto, this article seeks to shed light on the different positions taken by the author of the Ovide moralisé and his rewriter on the question of the spiritual meaning of the *Metamorphoses*. It will also show the strategies through which the rewriter framed his authorial voice within the textual space of the *Ovide moralisé*.

1. Distinctive features of the rewriting in Z^3 and Z^4

The two $codices Z^3$ and Z^4 are unusual in the tradition of the Ovide moralisé. Even though for the most part the rewriter maintains the French translation and the concrete interpretations of the text, he is not consistent throughout his work; he modifies some passages of the Ovide moralisé and deletes all the spiritual interpretations, which constitute a

major part of the original work. Moreover, the author adds and develops historical explanations that are not in the *Ovide moralisé* and omits others that are transmitted by the rest of the manuscript tradition.² [In this case, according to the classical and medieval conception of history (Guenée 1980: 27), I use the term "historical" to describe the interpretations dealing with history or social morality.] The new author even modifies the translation itself in certain passages and also expresses his disagreement over particular interpretations, as we will see later in the article. As Jung (1996b: 270) convincingly showed, while the distinguishing feature of the *Ovide moralisé* is its spiritual interpretations, in Z^3 and Z^4 the *Ovide moralisé* is changed into something new, a 'livre d'histoire' (a book on stories). Jung (1996b: 274) also demonstrated that the rewriter did not work with a manuscript of the Latin text of the Metamorphoses or other Latin texts but with the Ovide moralisé itself, together with other vernacular texts. In contrast to the 'original' French translation, the new author changes or deletes some difficult passages, and he also elaborates on specific topics such as love, expanding the interpretations of the love stories of Pyramus and Thisbe, Eurydice and Orpheus, and Mars and Venus. Furthermore, he develops the fables about love; in the story of Cephalus, for instance, he adds 60 verses on the protagonist's despair over the death of his wife. Some narratives are also expanded by the addition of verses from other medieval works. For example, the rewriter complements the story of Oedipus with episodes from the Roman de Thèbes. In \mathbb{Z}^3 and \mathbb{Z}^4 , Book IX recounts the genealogy of Oedipus in a version that is inspired by the *Roman de Thèbes* (Ovide re-moralisé, IX. 1098–1299) (Deleville 2019: vol 3, 272).

¹ For the difference between the concrete meaning and the spiritual one, see Possamai 2006: 380 and 396.

² For that matter, the author of the *Ovide moralisé* uses the word 'histoire' for the readings from both euhemeristic and social ethics standpoints (Possamai 2006: 383–96).

So if we consider the changes made to the *Ovide moralisé* by the new author, we are justified in applying the term 'rewriting' to the text transmitted in Z^3 and Z^4 . According to Genette (1982: 340) and Arrigo (2015: 299–301), a rewriting always changes the meaning of the hypotext. Thus, the author of Z^3 and Z^4 can be considered a rewriter, for he does not simply copy out the *Ovide moralisé* identically, but changes the overall meaning of the text and alters its moral reach at the same time. This is the process that I allude to in the title of this paper through the use of the adjective 're-moralisé'. Moreover, following Jung (1996b: 274), I choose not to define the new writer as a 'translator' or a 're-translator', in order to stress the fact that the text of Z^3 and Z^4 is not a new translation of the Latin *Metamorphoses*.

2 The debate on the spiritual meaning of the text

Jung (1996: 92) has shown that the rewriter distances himself from the spiritual interpretations given in the *Ovide moralisé* by systematically omitting Christian allegories (i.e., the spiritual readings). He maintains the historical interpretations and sometimes also the moral ones, but only when they deal with social topics concerning life on earth, not the afterlife. For example, he maintains the moral-historical description of Bacchus, in which there is a strong condemnation of alcohol abuse: he even concludes this interpretation with ten appended lines emphasizing the social damage that alcohol causes (Deleville 2019: vol 2, 339, Book III: 2312–23).

The rewriter avoids any references to the spiritual allegories or to the Christian dogma. In the prologue to Z^3 and Z^4 , for example, he replaces the reference to Christian truth with a reference to plural and human truths. For the new writer, the *Metamorphoses* holds 'mainte grant science notable, | Maint secret, mainte demoustrance' [Many great significant knowledge, | Many secrets, many demonstrations] (Deleville 2019: vol 2, 19, Book I: 102–

103). These lines replace a part of the prologue of the *Ovide moralisé* that was deleted by the

new writer:

Qui le sens en porroit savoir,

La veritez seroit aperte,

Qui souz les fables gist couverte. (Baker and others: vol 2, 9, Book I: 45–47)

[The truth that lies hidden beneath the fables will be disclosed to one who can discern

the meaning of them (Copeland: 1991, 109)]

In this passage, the hidden meaning of the Metamorphoses is defined as a Christian one. The

noun group 'la veritez' [the truth] refers specifically to the Christian truth. Thus, by deleting

the passage, the rewriter rejects the spiritual readings imposed on Ovid's poem.

At the end of the poem, the rewriter explains why he deletes the spiritual readings

transmitted in the Ovide moralisé:

En ce livre je n'ai mie

Escripte nulle allegorie

[...]

Ovides mesmes, qui les fist,

³ All quotations from these two manuscripts are taken from the critical edition in Deleville (2019). All the

translations from Old French to English are mine, except when another author has already translated a part of the

Ovide moralisé.

4

N'i entendi pas tel sens sans do[t]e

Com l'alegorie nous note. (Deleville 2019: vol 2, Book XIV: 102–103)

[In this book I have not written any allegory. [...] Even Ovid, who wrote the fables, certainly did not intend this meaning, as the allegory shows.]

With this term, "allegorie", the rewriter probably is referring to the spiritual interpretations given in the *Ovide moralisé*. Although in Old French the word does not always refer to Christian readings (Jung 1971: 12), it is the term used by the author of the *Ovide moralisé* to allude to the Christian and moral meanings of the text (Possamai 2006: 396). Indeed, the author of the *Ovide moralisé* explains the difference between the 'allegorie' (spiritual meaning) and the other interpretations ('sentence', 'glose' or 'sens') (Possamai 2006: 396). Following the *Ovide moralisé*, the author of Z^3 and Z^4 also understands the word 'allegorie' in a spiritual way; in fact he deletes every interpretation dealing directly with Christ and Christian motifs, and even removes the moral expositions which refer to the Christian dogma.

The rejection of the spiritual meaning given to Ovid's poem is also suggested by certain expressions that introduce additions or developments. When the rewriter develops or adds a historical explanation, he always insists on the truth of his own interpretation of the text. For example, the *Ovide moralisé* does not provide a historical meaning for the myth of Pasiphae. The reasons for this decision are obvious: the tale of Pasiphae is considered real in the Middle Ages, because it is part of History according to euhemerism. In addition, for Blumenfeld-Kosinski (1996: 317), the author of the *Ovide moralisé* does not give an euhemeristic explanation of the myth because he intends to focus on the spiritual interpretation of Pasiphae's behaviour. Unlike the *Ovide moralisé*, the rewriter provides

⁴ If he had rationalized it, there would be no "contre-nature" behaviour which "allows for the idea that human nature is perverted in its lack for God" (Blumenfeld-Kosinski 1996: 317).

another interpretation of the story. Pasiphae is depicted as a shameful young woman who falls in love with a good-looking man that she has just seen going to a house of ill repute. She confesses her love to the attractive man. Unfortunately, he rebuffs her advances. Despite the rejection, the girl seeks a way to enjoy a night with her love interest, and Dedalus suggests that she dresses up as a prostitute so she can satisfy her immoderate desire. The rewriter describes his interpretation as the 'droit sens' [the right meaning] of the tale (Deleville 2019: vol 1, 216, book VIII: 805). Expressions such as 'droit sens', or 'vraie exposition' [true interpretation] are systematically used in the rewriter's own interpretations of the myths. These expressions suggest the existence of an implicit debate with the original text on the hidden meaning of the *Metamorphoses*.

3. Replacing the author of the *Ovide moralisé*: the example of Calisto

In the rewriting, the debate about the true meaning of Ovid's poem is ingeniously distributed across different sections of the text. Particularly interesting, for example, is the use of the word 'translateur' [translator]⁵ in the rubrics of Z^3 and Z^4 to designate both the rewriter and the author of the *Ovide moralisé*, thus challenging the latter's primacy. Another compelling example is the superimposition of a new meaning on both the text and the interpretation of the myth of Calisto in the rewriting of the *Ovide moralisé*.

In the manuscripts Z^3 and Z^4 , the rubrics introduce the content of each passage. Four of these rubrics contain the word 'translateur' (Jung 1996a: 90). The first two occurrences are connected to the historical interpretation given by the author of the *Ovide moralisé* to Jupiter's punishment of humankind: 'Translateur raconte de la Bible' [The translator

⁵ Even though the new writer claims to be the 'translateur' of the text, I will still use the word "rewriter" for the reasons given earlier.

discusses the Bible] (Deleville 2019: vol 2 68, Book I: 1329rubr.) and 'Cy parle le translateur de ce livre de Nambrot et des Babiloniens' [Here, the translator of the book talks about Nimrod and Babylonians] (Deleville 2019: vol 2, Book I: 1392rubr.). In both cases, the word 'translateur' refers to the author of the *Ovide moralisé*, who discusses passages from the Bible (considered in the Middle Ages to be History) in relation to the myth of Jupiter (also understood as a historical event).

The term 'translateur' also appears in the rubrics introducing passages in which the rewriter explains his own understanding of the *Metamorphoses*. On this occasion, however, the term is associated with the rewriter rather than with the author of the Ovide moralisé. The word 'translateur', for example, introduces the moral reading of the myth of Calisto (which is not told in the *Ovide moralisé*), and also introduces the verses that I have already quoted above (Deleville 2019: vol 2, Book XIV: 102–03), in which the rewriter claims to have chosen not to write an 'allegorie'. Thus, the rewriter identifies himself as a 'translateur' in the same way as he previously referred to the author of the Ovide moralisé. He replaces the writer, and the word 'translateur' becomes polysemous. In \mathbb{Z}^3 and \mathbb{Z}^4 , the word is used to designate both the author and the rewriter, which suggests that the rewriter is taking on the identity of the author of the Ovide moralisé (Jung 1996a: 92). According to Jung, the rewriter uses this device to distance himself from certain interpretations of the *Ovide moralisé* (1996a: 92). The new author not only takes on the identity of the original author and conveys his own reading of the *Metamorphoses*, but in fact goes further by trying to replace the author and to impose his own reading. The rational explanation of Calisto's myth, introduced by the word 'translateur', is a good example of this skilful substitution.

⁶ The rubrics are "Translateur enseignement" (Lesson by the translator) (Deleville 2019: vol 2 169, book II: 1113rubr.) and "La fin du grant sermon Pitagoras. Translateur" (The end of Pythagoras' sermon. Translator) (BnF, français, 870, fol 268v).

Thanks to the work of Marylène Possamai (2006: 190–233), we know that the original author of the *Ovide moralisé* ingeniously adapts his translation in order to introduce his allegories to the myth. In other words, the author is 'preparing the ground for the first moralization' already within the narration of the myth by adding some motifs which do not appear in the Ovidian text and are used in the moralization (Griffin 2015: 39). The rewriter adopts the same strategy. Like the author of the *Ovide moralisé*, he modifies the narration of a myth to introduce and strengthen the interpretations he wants to impose on it. The myth of Calisto (also addressed in Possamai's contribution to this volume), is a fine example of this practice.

The young nymph Calisto wanted to keep her virginity in order to be an honourable servant of the chaste Diana. However, one day, Jupiter fell in love with her and resolved to sleep with her. He changed his appearance to look like Diana so that he could approach Calisto, and finally he raped her. Calisto tried to hide her pregnancy from Diana, but one day she was discovered; Diana immediately cast her out and Juno transformed her into a bear. Calisto finally gave birth to a child who later would try to kill her. Fortunately, Jupiter managed to protect her and change her into a star.

In the *Ovide moralisé*, Diana is presented as Virginity and Calisto as a girl who lost Diana's company. The author condemns young women who surrender themselves to their lovers and then abort. In his version of the myth, the rewriter maintains the beginning of this explanation, but discards the diatribe against debauchery and abortion. He prefers to give a new interpretation of his own. For him, Jupiter represents the duplications men who prey on innocent girls and tell them that it is acceptable to love someone, just to be able satisfy their desire.

Unlike the author of the *Ovide moralisé*, in his rewriting and the following interpretation of the myth the new author insists on the topic of deceitfulness. For example, in

the 'original' *Ovide moralisé*, Jupiter, who is in love with the beautiful Calisto, says to himself that he wants to take the girl's virginity without being discovered by his wife:

De ceste avrai le pucelage

Que ja ma feme nel savra

Ne ja ne s'en apercevra. (De Boer 1915–1938: vol 1 203, Book II: 1452–54)

[I will take her virginity, so that my wife will never know it and will never notice it.]

This passage is slightly changed and expanded upon in the rewriting of the *Ovide moralisé*. Particularly important is the emphasis placed on deceit:

De ceste aray le pucellage.

Homs ne femme ne le saura,

Ne nul ne s'en apercevra.

Se je puis, ge la desevray

Et tout mon bon d'elle feray. (Deleville 2019: vol 2, 157, Book II: 869-873)

[I will take her virginity. No man or woman will know it or will ever notice it. If I can, I will deceive her and I will satisfy my desire for her.]

The addition of the last two lines prepares the rewriter's exposition of the male capacity to deceive innocent young women. In his interpretation, in fact, the rewriter repeats the verb 'decevoir' [deceive], suggesting that the introduction of the same verb in the translation was intentional. He states that '[ce] sa propre forme eüst, | Jamais deceue ne l'eüst' [[Jupiter]

would never have deceived her, if he had worn his proper form] (Deleville 2019: vol 2 169, Book II: 1122–23). For the rewriter, these duped girls would have saved their honour if 'hommes ne les eussent deceues' [men had not deceived them] (Deleville 2019: vol 2 171, Book II: 1169). Furthermore, the new author declares that: 'c'est moult grant pechés [...] | A homme de decevoir femme' [it is a great sin for a man to deceive a woman] (Deleville 2019: vol 2 171, Book II: 1172–73). This link between the modification in the translation and the main topic of the new interpretation suggests that the rewriter is intentionally transforming the text for his own purpose, as the author of the *Ovide moralisé* did with Ovid's poem.

There is another aspect in which the two texts differ. In the *Ovide moralisé*, Jupiter 'Si prent de Dyane erroment | La forme et le contenement' [quickly takes the form and the behaviour of Diana] (De Boer 1915–1938: vol 1 203, Book II: 1461–62). The author underlines the speed of the metamorphosis by the use of the adverb 'erroment' [quickly]. Unlike the earlier author, the rewriter insists on the perfection of the metamorphosis: 'De Diane prist proprement | La forme et le contenement' [he took exactly the form and the behaviour of Diana] (Deleville 2019: vol 2 160, Book II: 879–81). The use of the adverb 'proprement' (exactly, in a way that specifically refers to one's reality) is also mentioned in the rewriter's interpretation, according to which the myth deals with men who act like Jupiter, 'Qui sa propre forme deffist, | Car [ce] sa propre forme eüst, | Jamais deceue ne l'eüst' [who changes his own form, because if he had borne his own form, he would never have deceived her] (Deleville 2019: vol 2 169, Book II: 1121–22). Here, the adjective 'propre' (of one's own) echoes the adverb 'proprement' in the narration of the fable. This link creates a parallelism between the narration of the myth and its interpretation. Thus, the rewriter works

⁷ In Deleville (2019: vol. 1 176–201 and 'Christine de Pizan, lectrice de l'*Ovide moralisé*, mais lequel ?' (forthcoming)).

in the same way as the author of the *Ovide moralisé*: just as the author of the *Ovide moralisé* transformed Ovid's poem to accord with his own view of the world, so the rewriter of the *Ovide moralisé* adapts the translation to his didactic purpose. However, while the first author stresses female duplicity, the rewriter underlines the duplicity of the male character. So this is a complete inversion of the interpretation of the myth, due to an ideological difference regarding women.

Unlike the author of the *Ovide moralisé*, the rewriter sometimes defends female characters. Eurydice, for example, is now not seen in a negative light. She is no longer 'celle qui trop s'esloigne folement / De raisonable entendement' [the one who madly falls away from reason], as suggested by the author of the *Ovide moralisé* (De Boer 1915–1938: vol 4 16, Book X: 232–33). On the contrary, she is the woman who 'deffent / S'amour pour estriver mout fort' [defends her love through much effort] (Deleville 2019: vol 3 331, Book X: 210–11). The rewriter also defends a number of forsaken wives, like Dido against Eneas or Medea against Jason (Deleville 2019: vol 1, Book XIV: 176–79). As shown in these examples, the rewriter takes the side of the women and also influences contemporary female writers. As I have argued elsewhere, Christine de Pizan – in *Le livre du duc des vrais amants* – partly draws on the rewriter's interpretation of Calisto (Deleville 2019: vol. 1 176–201 and 'Christine de Pizan, lectrice de l'*Ovide moralisé*, mais lequel?' (forthcoming)). Christine de Pizan knew of the rewriting of the *Ovide moralisé* and found in it some examples and arguments to defend her position against Jean de Meun in the early fifteenth-century debate on the *Roman de la Rose*.

What emerges from these examples is the idea that the rewriter imposes his point of view on his source text by drawing on the same strategies employed by the author of the *Ovide moralisé* in his translation of Ovid's poem. In his diatribe against abortion and female debauchery, the author of the *Ovide moralisé* conveys his disapproval by asserting that no one

should trust a woman who has had an abortion, because she has committed murder before and may do so again:

J'oseroie dire en apert

Que, qui en tel feme se fie,

Il est em peril de sa vie

[...]

Pour voir, ele l'empoisonera,

Ou en dormant l'estoufera! (De Boer 1915–1938: vol 1 209, book II : 1742–48)

[I would freely say that whoever trusts such a woman is in danger for his life [...]. To tell the truth, she will poison him and suffocate him when he sleeps!]

The rewriter of the *Ovide moralisé* is as eloquent as his model, but he uses the same emphatic tone to a different end: that is, to warn women against unfaithful lovers:

Ja ne sera que je m'en taisse,

Car se femme croit mon conseil,

Je li lo et moult li conseil

Qu'elle ne croye homme en tel cas.

S'elle fait, ne s'en doubte pas,

Que encore s'en repentira

Amerement et maldira

L'eure c'onques homme crut

Ne que telle acointance eut. (Deleville 2019: vol 2 172, book II: 1183–1191)

[I will never stop talking about it, because if a woman believes my advice, I urge and strongly advise her not to believe men in this case. If she does so, it is sure that she will still bitterly reproach herself for it and will curse the day when she believed such a man and had such company.]

Both texts present the same subjectivity, the same use of the future tense, and the same fatal representations. Although the rewriter may offer the impression of taking the voice and identity of the author, he enacts a complete moral reversal. By assuming the status ('translateur') and the voice of the author, he manages to replace him and has the last word on the interpretation of the myth.

Possamai has shown that the original author is a preacher who tries to involve and move the reader by using the phatic and emotional functions of language (Possamai 2006: 717–18, referring to Pomel 2001: 145). The interpretation of Calisto may be a good example of this type of rhetoric. Both the author and the rewriter of the *Ovide moralisé* speak directly to the readers and try to scare them in order to convince them. The main aim of the original author is salvation in the afterlife; the rewriter, on the other hand, has no interest in the hereafter, focusing only on life on Earth and specifically on topics such as women's reputations and men's dishonesty. The voice of the rewriter is not that of a preacher, as it is in the case of the author of the *Ovide moralisé*; he draws on the first author's language but only to replace the topics and voice of the preacher with his own. He never defines his interpretations as 'allegories', but talks of 'enseignement' (lesson), a description that the first author does not

use (Deleville 2019: vol 2 169, Book II. 1113rubr.). By using the word 'enseignement', which in Old French generally refers to a moral lesson, the rewriter presents himself as a moralist. He also uses the expression 'moral sens' [moral meaning] (Deleville 2019: vol 2 412, Book IV: 1705) to define one of his interpretations of the Ovidian myths. Thus, for the rewriter, replacing the author is a means of conveying not only his view on the *querelle* about women but also to offer insights into the true meaning of the *Metamorphoses*.

4 A new truth

The rewriter does not conceal his disagreement with the spiritual manner in which the author of the Ovide moralisé allegorizes the Ovidian poem. He deletes all the references to the Christian dogma and all the spiritual allegories, but develops the historical aspects and provides some new ones. Thus, he seems to think that the truth of the *Metamorphoses* must be concrete and human. He also suggests that the meaning of the text must conform to the Latin poem. This opinion is clearly defended when he states that Ovid could not have had the same intention as the author of the spiritual interpretation of the Ovide moralisé; he searches for the intention of Ovid behind the fable, instead of an image of the Christian religion. He defines the exposition as 'l'antante a quoy la fable acorde' [the intention the fable adheres to] (Deleville 2019: vol 2 290, Book III: 1007). The allegorical interpretation is known as a similitudo between a text and its explanation, its deep signification (Strubel 2002: 20). The author of the Ovide moralisé also shares this conception and tacitly defines the allegories as a similitudo (Possamai 2006: 330, referring to IX. 2709) considering them as 'acordable a voir' [compatible with truth]. Yet, the rewriter insists on this idea, and emphasizes it in his interpretation while trying to offer new elements that are closer to the narrative. For example, in the interpretation of Calisto he focuses on the changing form of Jupiter and gives an explanation for it; the author of the Ovide moralisé, on the other hand, concentrates on his

criticism of abortion, which has no clear link to the Ovidian myth. So the rewriter suggests that the author of the *Ovide moralisé* does not interpret the Latin poem properly, because he gives a Christian explanation that is far removed from the true meaning of the text. For him, the truth of the text must be found in accordance with it. As Miranda Griffin (2015: 46) has shown, in the *Ovide moralisé*, 'the naked truth turns out to be another layer of *integument* and interpretation, exposing a Christian truth which was always-already there, but which can only be expressed in veiled language'. In contrast, in the text transmitted in manuscripts Z^3 and Z^4 , the Christian truth is not 'always-already there', because for the rewriter Ovid could not have known this truth.

To conclude, I would like to return to the pun in the title of this paper. By 're-moralisé', I mean that the rewriter of the manuscripts Z changes the meaning of the text. He keeps the naturalistic and historical explanations offered by the author of the *Ovide moralisé*, but deletes the spiritual interpretations in order to put forward new material expressing his own moral perspective. With codices Z^3 and Z^4 , the *Ovide moralisé* became an 'Ovide remoralisé', an ideological and philosophical reflection on women and the truth hidden in the *Metamorphoses*. For this purpose, the rewriter cleverly supersedes the author of the *Ovide moralisé*. His own voice merges with the first author's voice, so much so that it eventually replaces it.

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- D^3 , Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 24306, third quarter of the fourteen century
- D⁴, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 443, c. 1410
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